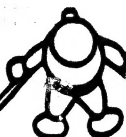


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MATWATCH

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Steve's Sidelights By Steve Beverly

THE STATE OF PAY

If you're keeping score at home, folks, we have had seven pay-per-view TV wrestling shows in the last 23 weeks. An average of one every three weeks. As much of a junkie as I am---and I just saw live arguably the best ever produced---it's time to pull back the horses.

Turner Home Entertainment chief Steve Chamberlain told MATWATCH last week WRESTLE WAR '89 drew an estimated buy-rate of between 1.5 and 2.0%. Our own independent survey of cable operators places the preliminary figure at 1.6%, about the same as the WWF ROYAL RUMBLE. If that figure holds, WW '89 was purchased in about 180,000 homes. Chamberlain estimates a profit for Turner of about \$1 million after all the splits with cable operators and the pay companies.

That's a good profit but nowhere near what Turner, or any other company in the pay-TV business, hopes to draw from a subscription show, particularly one which was probably the best-balanced and produced in the history of PPV. We can detail every reason why the buys are low, from the TBS standpoint: a declining lineup of syndicated stations, a time period for WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING that's harder to find than Easter eggs (see related story, Page 2), recovering from the black hole of the George Scott era---and, perhaps, partially, as MATWATCHer Dan Reilly stated in a letter to us this week, the masses are just so much in tune with Titan Sports they simply aren't interested in the NWA---though I feel the NWA planted a major seed for a rebirth last Sunday.

But let's tell the truth: when the hype of a WRESTLEMANIA can draw only a 6.1 buy-in (a figure considered marginal only two years ago) and when Turner people were talking last weekend of ecstasy if they scored a 2 with WW, there simply are too many shows.

Back in December, a major industry figure asked my view on the viability of a monthly pay wrestling show at \$9.95 each and an annual megashow at \$19.95. The prospect was proposed of selling an annual "season ticket" at a discount. I felt the pricing concept was novel and affordable. However, my opinion is there is not enough creativity to produce supercards that often and not burn out talent and bookers much faster than the accelerated dry-up rate of today's national promotions. Plus, even if, say, for a year, the creative quality could be maintained, I don't believe a monthly megashow is spaced enough apart to make viewers

feel they have the larger-than-life, special significance necessary to become hooked in the tent. When it comes right down to it, we already have the monthly "event," even though not all of them are pay. Since Thanksgiving,

we have had four WEF NBC specials, a WEF three-hour challenge show to CHI-TOWN RUMBLE and three CLASH specials from TBS. That adds up to fifteen special shows either free or on PPV in less than six months. Can you truly remember them all? If you had it to do over, would you not have bought all of the pay shows you purchased? Even if you are a hardcore fan, have you not reached the saturation point?

I honestly have. And in looking ahead to the coming five years, when I am convinced more mainline college and pro sports will eventually filter into the pay market, I only see more clutter. Oh, wrestling will probably always be at least marginally profitable because of the expanding addressable pay universe.

But I'm reminded of a Russell Baker column in THE NEW YORK TIMES in 1974 entitled "Turn the Sports Off." Baker wrote: "One can no longer keep track of all of the tennis tournaments that are now being shown on television. In football, Canadian football and the World Football League are on the air before the NFL preseason games even begin. Hockey and basketball are television staples. Even lacrosse can now be seen. I wonder if anybody remembers the Memphis Tams." Baker stated the saturation would finally end when people become sufficiently disenchanted with sports and their proliferation to "turn them off." I wonder if we aren't close to that point with pro wrestling.

THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES

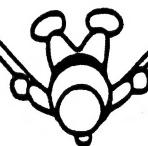
JAKE THE SNAKE ARRESTED
AFTER ORLANDO MATCHES

ORLANDO - WWF star Jake Roberts was arrested on aggravated battery charges Monday night in Orlando.

Police waited until after Roberts defeated Ted DiBiase before taking "The Snake" into custody. Roberts, 43, was booked on charges that he punched a 5-foot-7 Daytona Beach man last December.

John Bartlett, 27, claims Roberts punched him in the face and abdomen. In a sworn statement, Bartlett says Roberts began insulting the town and its women. Bartlett told authorities he challenged Roberts' remarks and found himself being slugged.

Roberts was released on \$2,500 bond.



THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING
MOVING BACK TO ORIGINAL TIME

ATLANTA - WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING, moved out of its traditional time period for the first time in its 17-year TBS history in January, will return to a permanent 6:05 p.m. (ET) slot June 24. MATWATCH has learned the switch was ordered by TBS majority owner Ted Turner.

Turner reportedly made the decision after studying declining ratings for WCW since its shift to a floating slot with the advent of baseball season. The May 6 show aired at 10:20 p.m. after being scheduled for a 9:50 start and only drew a 1.6 rating.

TBS premiered U.S. OLYMPIC GOLD, a ratings-troubled sports anthology, at 6:05 Jan. 14, in an effort to attract a cable package for the 1992 or 1994 Olympic games. GOLD has never topped a 1.4 rating and has consistently delivered weak shares to WCW, usually seen at 7:05.

GOLD will move to 10:05 p.m. June 24. The WCW return will follow by one night the premiere of THE NWA WRESTLING POWER HOUR at 10:30 p.m. on TBS.

TIGER JOE MARSH, FORMER WRESTLER AND ACTOR, DIES

CHICAGO - Retired wrestler/actor Tiger Joe Marsh died of heart failure May 9 at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago. He was 78.

The Hollywood Reporter lists Marsh as having won a version of the world heavyweight title in 1937. He quit wrestling for an acting career in 1954.

Marsh's most noted film credit was as Big Julie in "Guys and Dolls."

IRON SHEIK FIRED BY NWA AFTER AIRPORT INCIDENT

NASHVILLE - Informed sources have told MATWATCH Khosrow H. Vaziri, known as The Iron Sheik, was fired by the NWA after the May 7 WRESTLE WAR '89 card.

According to insiders, Vaziri entered into an altercation with either a security man or another employee at the Nashville airport.

No charges were filed against Vaziri but MATWATCH has been told the Sheik was responsible for the incident and was dismissed by NWA executive vice president Jim Herd.

Vaziri had been signed in February by former booker George Scott.

PINFALL PROFILE

WRESTLE WAR '89: THE TELEVISION SHOW

Had this been a choir performance, it would have been Mormon Tabernacle-style. Had it been a car, it would have been a Cadillac---or at least a Mercedes.

For the previous two NWA pay-per-view shows, I was expecting less than a dynamite show and was pleasantly surprised. This time, my expectations were high and, as I told Jim Ross, the night before WW'89, "I'm holding you to this one."

I was not disappointed. Arguably, and I underscore that because your view is equally valid, this was the best pay-per-view wrestling show ever. It had elements of surprise (the Dynamic Dudes upset of SSI, the post-match of Flair-Steamboat), another classic encounter between the top two U.S. performers of 1989, some of the best-choreographed ring entrances of any production of this ilk, an old-fashioned storytelling title change (Hayes-Luger), a strong power match (Warriors-Varsities) and another solid performance at the mike by Jim Ross and Bob Caudle.

Flaws? Sure. Tommy Edwards still went to too many crowd reaction shots before spots were finished. Plus, it was a full 20 seconds after Ross announced Teddy Long's appearance during the Butch Reed-Ranger Ross match before the camera ever picked up Teddy. We missed the shot of Kevin Sullivan actually tossing Missy Hyatt into the ring and with Hayes' upset win, we needed a followup interview with Michael and Terry Gordy.

But Joe Pedicino and Lance Russell kept things moving well with crisp interviews and the only real mistake came when Ross pitched to Caudle and Lance was actually doing the piece.

Production-wise, however, the Turner crew was at its best with the fewest technical flaws of any of its four PPV events. Craig Leathers' tight direction during the Oak Ridge Boys concert kept the show interesting even for non-country fans. Plus, the encore showing of Pedicino's FINAL COUNTDOWN video was a major plus.

I might have considered doing without the Ross-Reed match and Orton-Murdoch drew little heat for the intensity of a bullrope match. But there was no truly bad match for the TV audience and Jim Ross and his booking committee produced the best-balanced show I've seen.

However, in my view, one of the most telegenic stars of this industry ever was reborn at WW'89. If Flair-Steamboat was the glue which held this company together through its darkest time, Terry Funk may be the catalyst to revive it, and it is hard for me to see how he can't get over in a major way. His attack on Flair reminded me of Ethel Merman grabbing an audience and shaking it to submission on Broadway.

If nothing else, as one stated two weekends ago, this was the show which "de-Crockettized the NWA."

MATWATCH 25 SCALE: Quality of Matches, 3.8; Overall Production, 4.2; Announcing, 4.8; Crowd Enthusiasm, 3.3; Overall Excellence of Show, 4.5. TOTAL RATINGS: 20.6.

SCALE: PINFALL! - Must See PILEDRIVER - Excellent
POWERSLAM - Good DRAW - Average RESTHOLD - Fair BOMB
- Poor PLUS - Midscale rating.

(PNF) - Mike Graham d. El Cid; Tyree Pride d. El Diablo but Jim Backlund & Kareem Muhammad run in; Steelman d. Mike Awesome; Steve Keirn/Scott Hall win DQ over Al Perez/Terminator when Perez hits Keirn v. object but Nasty Boys save; Dustin Rhodes d. Ric Diamond; Lou Perez/Brett Sawyer win DQ over Southern Force when Black Bart uses branding iron. REPLAYS: Dusty Rhodes-Terry Funk studio brawl (both fined); Dick Slater loses 5 min. match with Diamond Dallas Page when Steelman interferes. Slater leaves Fla. for 90 days. DRAW.

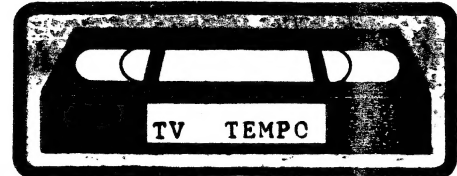
(CWA/SYND.) - Jeff Jarrett d. Keith Eric; Detroit Demolition d. Chris Frazier; CWA TAG TITLE: Stud Stable d. Mason-Dixon Connection when Sylvia hits Tracy Smothers v. kendo stick; \$2,000 RENEGADES STAMPEDE MATCH: Lord Humongous wins over Phil Hickerson, Mike Masters, Frankie Lancaster, Action Jackson, The Grappler; Master of Pain/Hickerson d. Johnny Reb/The Eliminator. ANGLES: Eddie Marlin forces Robert Fuller into loser-leave-CWA match vs. Jimmy Golden; Jeff Jarrett grabs & slaps Ronald V. Gossett IV and forces M.O.P./Hickerson into match vs. Jeff/Kerry Von Erich. POWERSLAM-PLUS.

(CMF) - U.S. JR. TITLE: Kevin Dillinger d. Scott Smith; Botswana Beast d. J.T. Walton/David Elder; Bill Dundee/Adrian Street d. Lou Fabiano/Lou Spiccoli but Japanese Connection & Dillinger run in & Dundee is branded; Todd Morton wins DQ over Stomper Harris when Stomper throws Todd over top rope & Ricky Morton makes save; Jap Conn d. Wendell Cooley/Jackie Fulton when Chono throws salt at Fulton. REPLAY: Tom Prichard-Ricky Morton handcuff angle. DRAW-PLUS.

(SCW) - Jim Powell d. Scrap Iron; Bambi d. Peggy Lee Leathers; Ron Starr double DQ vs. Nightmare Ted Allen; Brad Armstrong no contest vs. Tommy Rich in match which goes into parking lot and Rich bleeds all over Ford Probe; Mr. Wrestling II/The Bullet win DQ over Dino Minelli/Steve Lawler. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(MCCW) - ELIMINATION MATCH: Matt Borne wins for himself/Kerry Von Erich/Jeff Jarrett vs. Cactus Jack Manson/Killer Brooks/Buddy Roberts. Elimination order: Kerry disqualified, Jarrett d. Manson, Roberts d. Jarrett, Borne d. both Brooks & Roberts; Chris Adams/J.J. Funk draw vs. Brickhouse Brown/Iceman Parsons. MARS UPDATE: Suspensions of Skandor Akbar, Frank Dusek. POWERSLAM.

(NWA/SYND.) - [WORLD WIDE]: Jim Ross returns as host. CLIPS: All 5 WW'89 title matches. FULL HIGHLIGHTS: Flair-Steamboat, Road Warriors-Varsity Club, Luger-Hayes. ARENA: Rick Steiner d. The Enforcer; Dynamic Dudes d. Rip Morgan/Jack Victory. KEY INTERVIEW: Terry Funk (both shows). JOE PEDICINO'S NOSE (both shows): Muta-Doug Gilbert and Orton-Murdoch WW'89 clips. POWERSLAM-PLUS.



[NWA PRO]: Lance Russell joins Bob Caudle as co-host. Same WW CLIPS & HIGHLIGHTS. ARENA: Muta d. Randy Rose; Dudes d. Lee Scott/The Raider; Junkyard Dog d. Ron Simmons. POWERSLAM.

(NWA/TBS) - [WCW]: Muta d. Ranger Ross; Freebirds d. Cougar Jay/Lee Scott; Road Warriors d. Tom Branch/Dewayne Bruce in 9 seconds; Scott Steiner wins DQ over Kevin Sullivan when, after Kevin scores pin, Paul E. Dangerously brings in chair for Sullivan to injure and ref reverses; Terry Funk destroys Troy Aldridge after slapping him twice and offering him chance to withdraw. CLIPS: WW'89 title matches; Flair-Funk angle. VIDEO: Dynamic Dudes. ANGLE: Teddy Long introduces first member of his stable, Norman (Makhan Singh); Jim Herd announces pairings for world tag tournament. POWERSLAM-PLUS.

[MAIN EVENT]: <AM> - Rick Steiner d. Jack Victory; TV TITLE MATCHES: Sting d. Danny Spivey, Sting d. Mike Rotunda; Dynamic Dudes d. Raider/Enforcer. <PM> - WW'89 highlights. POWERSLAM.

(ACW) - Ring Lords d. David Isley/Brian Johnson; Bobby Fulton d. Len Wagner; Larry Stephens d. Jack Jackson; WORLD JR. TITLE: Nelson Royal d. Rusty Riddle; ACW HWT. TITLE: Don Kernodle wins DQ over Doug Somers when Colt Steel runs in under mask. Steel is suspended. DRAW.

(AWA) - Tribute to Da Crusher; Akio Sato d. Tarzan; Larry Zbyszko d. Rockin' Randy; INTERVIEWS: Badd Company denies dissension. VIDEOS: Destruction Crew, AWA title contenders. BOMB-PLUS...if they wanted to honor Crusher, why not devote the whole show and not weave in and out of current angles?

(WEF/USA) - [PRIME TIME]: Recap of Valentine-Garvin; Bad News Brown d. George South; Paul Roma d. Boris Zhukov; Foghorn Leghorn d. Larry Sharpe; Jake Roberts d. Virgil; John Studd wins DQ over Haku when Andre attacks and chokes before Jim Duggan saves with 2x4 on Haku/Andre; Blue Blazer d. Gary Royal; Rougeaus, Tully & Arn win squashes; Hercules Hernandez wins DQ over Barbarian. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(WEF/SYND.) - [SUPERSTARS]: KING OF WEF MATCH: Duggan d. Haku; Tito Santana d. Barry Horowitz; Brutus Beefcake d. Tony Leone; Other winners: Anabolic Warrior, Bad News Brown, Twin Towers. FEATURES: Zeus is introduced, Liz tells Tony Schiavone Hulkamania will live forever. UPDATE: Jake Roberts-Ted DiBiase angle. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

[CHALLENGE]: Demolition d. Honky Tonk Man/Greg Valentine; Bret Hart d. Bucky Wagner; Barbarian d. Tom Yates; Rick Martel d. Jack Evans; Other winners: Sheepwackers, Hercules. CLIP: Warrior-Rude at WMS. RESTHOLD.

[PWTW] - NWA, Ranger Ross d. Lee Scott; ACW, D.I./MOD Squad Spike d. Todd Champion/Jack Johnson; CMF, Kerry

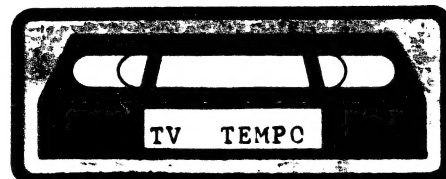
Von Erich/Todd Morton/Wendell Cooley draw vs. Jap Conn/Alan Martin; WEF, Roberts d. Chris Duffy; MCCW, Robert Fuller d. J.J. Funk; SCW, Tommy Rich d. Stacy Stone; CWA, Brian Lee d. Chris Frazier; Stampede, Makham Singh wins squash. MARS WRESTLER OF WEEK - Von Erich. POWERSLAM.

LINE OF THE WEEK - 1. Terry Funk, NWA: "Ric Flair comes to the ring like Barbara Bush with anorexia." 2. Funk, NWA: "Ric Flair comes to the ring with a banana nose, with horse teeth, looking like Phyllis Diller in brag." 3. Funk, NWA: "John Wayne, where are you? Audie Murphy, where are you? Where are all our heroes? Well, here I am and I'm glad to see you." 4. Jesse Ventura, WEF: "McMahon, what kills me is how all you do is ride the boat depending on which way the water's flowing." 5. Tom Prichard, CMF, on Adrian Street: "Just don't let him kiss you. You've heard about fairy tales." 6. Michael Hayes, WCM: "Luger, when the blood comes out, I'm gonna bite into it." 7. Paul E. Dangerously & Lance Russell, NME: PAUL, "I was on Wall Street." LR, "Clipping the grocery coupons to save 17 cents an item?" 8. Paul E., NME: "Lance, you once said I'm a man of many letters: S.O.B.!" 9. Dusty Rhodes, PMF: "Stay tuned...and we'll show you what's CAUSIN' all this excitement." 10. Prichard, CMF, on Dundee: "He looks like Elvis Presley in a pink jumpsuit."

11. Jim Ross, WCM: "We talk to everybody...even those who are unemployed (Teddy Long)." 12. Long, WCM: "Teddy Long is not long gone and he ain't gonna be long gone." 13. Marc Lowrance, MCCW, on ref Harold Harris: "I thought April Fool was last month." 13. Jim Cornette, CMF: "We may be on vacation from wrestling but we're not on vacation from a good fight." 14. Charlie Platt, CMF: "If they (Jap Conn) were to wear a set of handcuffs, I'd swear they'd be students at the Tom Prichard School of Wrestling." 15. Hawk, WCM: "You ever see Sgt. Snorkel beat up Beetle Bailey? It's like human waste. That's what the SST will be." 16. Russell, NWA: "Johnny (Ace) got Lee Scott and made him have dreams of Myrtle Beach." 17. Jake Roberts, WEF, to DiBiase: "This river is too wide. This building is too big to jump off." 18. Prichard, CMF, on Cooley: "He looks like a polecat. He smells like a skunk. The night he beat me, it reeked." 19. Larry Zbyszko, AWA: "When you get burnt in Larryland, you look like Chris (The Blimp) Berman." 20. Baby Doll, ACW: "I know that body. I know who's under that mask (Colt Steel)."

21. Lance & Paul E., NME: LR: "We made it through our first doggone hour." PAUL, "Yes, we did. I carried the show...made you look good." 22. Johnny Valiant, AWA, to Lee Marshall: "If they put your brain in a canary, it would fly backwards."

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Funk, NWA: "Terry Funk does not wrestle for Jim Herd or Ted Turner. I wrestle for myself." 2. Ventura, WEF: "She (Liz) is a tramp to me, McMahon." 3. Ross, WCM: "The Braves win one every now and then."



QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK - 1. Ventura, WEF: "McMahon, why don't you make up your mind one of these years?" 2. Platt, CMF, to Prichard: "Does the Rock & Roll Express' music make your feet a little happy and want to dance out of the building?" 3. Bad News Brown, WEF: "What happened to you?," to Danny Davis after getting firm count from the reinstated ref.

BEST PICTURES - 1. TBS, Funk-Aldridge. 2. WEF, Anabolic Warrior gouging eyes. 3. MCCW, Buddy Roberts arguing with female fan. 4. MCCW, J.J. Funk-Brickhouse brawl.

BEST PRODUCTION - TBS, for Norman & Dynamic Dudes videos.

BEST INTERVIEW - Funk, NWA PRO/WORLD WIDE.

WORST INTERVIEW - Tony Schiavone w. Liz, WEF.

NICKNAMES OF THE WEEK - 1. "Lex Loser," given to Luger by Hayes. 2. "Mach," given to Randy Savage by Ventura.

DREADED GLITCH AWARDS - 1. NWA PRO, for spelling Murdoch with a "k" on the end. 2. TBS, for "Ashville NC," leaving out an "e."

BOO AWARDS - 1. WEF, for wasting Tony Schiavone's fine talent with that mindless interview with Liz Poffo. 2. TBS, for running two Sting TV title wins in same show Saturday a.m. Showcase more of the talent.

TUBE TALK

We received no PORTLAND report this week but hope to catch up next....Terry Funk and Michael Hayes stole the WCM show Saturday night. Not shown on camera: Funk came out and slapped Joe Pedicino to draw heat....TBS show didn't start until 10:30 because of Braves runover....The NWA world tag pairings: Freebirds vs. Warriors, Dudes vs. New Zealand Militia (Jacko Victory & Rip Morgan), Midnights vs. Reed-Orton, SST vs. Simmons-Ranger Ross.

Both WEF and NWA WORLD WIDE premiered new music themes, opens and graphics Saturday and both are a fresh improvement....Tom Prichard is becoming a much heavier heel at the color mike on CMF and his and Charlie's exchanges Saturday were sharp....Lance & Paul will jell nicely on NME....We finally learn that Tim Dicks is the newest SCW announcer. Yeah, he's as bad as Starr & Masters....Timely ad: Terry Funk's appearance in the new Patrick Swayze movie ROADHOUSE....CMF will soon tape at Dothan's Civic Center...Lastly, after weeks of pleading, why can't the transitions from taped segments to ring on WCM be less abrupt??? FSB.

COMINGS & GOINGS

SLAM's main event will feature Hulk Hogan & Brutus Beefcake vs. Zeus & Randy Savage.

YOUR RESPONSE: As of Friday night, we had 96 letters and phone calls on WW'89, all giving it a "thumbs up." Forty-five said it was the best pay show ever, 13 said the first hour was slow but did not detract from the show, and only three people complained about the Oak Ridge Boys, though 21 said their seg went too long.

GUTS & GLORY: CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS VII has been moved to Fort Bragg NC on the Army post June 14 and will be subtitled GUTS & GLORY. Ric Flair will take on Terry Funk in the main event, along with the semifinals and finals of the NWA world tag team tournament and a TV title match between Sting and the Great Muta.

MORE TALENT: Jimmy Garvin is returning as the "third Freebird." Brian Pillman will be known as "Flying Brian." And expect Ricky Steamboat to get a shot at Michael Hayes' U.S. title real quick.

FRIDAY NIGHTS: The POWER HOUR show debuting June 23 on TBS still doesn't have a host but if Jim Cornette rejoins the NWA, as expected---and we're told it's now a matter of agreeing on money---expect him to be a top candidate. FUNK'S GRILL is penciled in. And expect Paul E. Dangerously to have a role. This show will be a great slot for DANGER ZONE when WCW is only an hour and can't handle the seg.

MELTZER'S VOICE: To you in the Northeast, Dave Meltzer will be on WALE-AM 1400 in Fall River MA with Cody Boyns Thursday night from 6-7:30 p.m. Be sure to call in.

SCORING WITH RED: The FNN/SCORE CAULFLOWER ALLEY CLUB special Sunday night featured Red Bastien taking calls from viewers. Danny Wolf hopes to do more specials of this ilk.

SCORE IN JUNE: Wrestling on FNN in June will solely be PRO WRESTLING THIS WEEK Saturdays at 10:30. The CWA is not scheduled for a slot at present. But talk is surfacing that SCORE's hours may be re-expanded, leaving open the door for more wrestling.

BARRY BEAT: Second-level Titan officials did have serious talks with Barry Windham but reports are that Vince McMahon squelched them. The heat is apparently too strong from Barry's 1985 departure and Vince flat says no. So Barry will become an integral part of what's left of the PMF.

MEADOWLANDS: Monday night in the Meadowlands, Demolition took a DQ over Twin Towers, Anabolic Warrior DQ over Rick Rude, Hennig d. Blazer, Honky d. Hilbilly, Bret Hart drew vs. Greg Valentine, Foghorn Leghorn d. Brawler, Rick Martel d. Tito Santana and Jimmy Powers d. Mike Sharpe. Crowd was only around 4,000.

ZEUS' DEUCE: The WEF wrestlers are so angry at Zeus being imported that many of them are being told he's not going to be a major player. But we're told SUMMER

NO GUTS: From L.A., a clipping quotes Hogan saying NO HOLDS BARRED as "not guts and blood and killing." Hulk goes on to say acting "comes natural. You don't act, you react." Yep. He told Frank Swertlow he declined a number of movie offers because he wanted to give his Hulkamaniacs something "other than a wrestling movie." Okay.

MIL'S THOUSANDS: Jerry Jarrett reportedly pleased with \$13,000 house at Sportatorium for the May 5 RENEGADES RAMPAGE with Mil Mascaras on the card.

WHOSE CUP?: The Crockett Cup can sit on the shelf now but talk is serious about doing a SAM MUCHNICK CUP tag team tournament for a big NWA show in St. Louis and I can't think of anything more appropriate.

MOVING OUT?: Nobody will talk publicly about this, for obvious reasons, but the strong sense from here is that TBS officials are growing more determined to ease the Crockett family out of the company. In Nashville, I picked up more irritation with what has been termed constant complaining and needless interference from the Crocketts. Just my hunch but I don't think the sentiment will grow any warmer.

LOOK! THERE'S TERRY: Lou Thesz, Pat O'Connor and Terry Funk had all agreed they would leave down the aisle of the Nashville Auditorium as soon as Ric Flair regained the NWA belt at WW'89. Thesz and O'Connor had not been told of Funk's big angle. Both were stunned when they arrived backstage and saw Funk on the monitor in the ring.

FUNK ON WCW: Saturday night, Funk stole the show on WCW and he will again next week. Also, this coming Saturday, watch for an opening round world tag team tourney match between the Freebirds and Road Warriors which gets quite heated. I'm not telling the finish.

TONY'S TIGERS: My friend Tony Richards from Paducah KY, who handles the 6-hour block on TV54 every Saturday night, hosted a WW watching party. A contest winner and 30 of his friends viewed the show at a furniture store, which set up a living room section, and pizza was brought in. Tony said the folks went nuts during the Funk angle.

TOM'S SIDE: I've been told I'm going to be given Tom Prichard's side of the not-coming-to-the-NWA story and I hope that may happen during my visit to the CMF show in Birmingham Friday night. Cornette & the Midnights will be there and TV will be taped.

NO LITTLE MACHO: Finally, I've been told outright that the TORONTO STAR report that Liz Poffo is expecting is totally false. We are told she'll be spending less time at arenas and more time promoting her new perfume line.

ANGLE: Bill Kunkel's outrageous newsletter features an editorial NWA and Ric Flair fans will cherish. Write for prices to Bill at 8906 Woodhaven Blvd., Woodhaven NY 11425.

I REMEMBER: The Night Buddy Colt's Plane Crashed

Buddy Colt had always enjoyed flying since his military days, when he wasn't playing the erstwhile heel of Southern rings. Dating back to the summer of 1974, Buddy had regularly piloted a rented craft to bring fellow wrestlers into Waycross, Ga., on Saturday nights following their 4 pm TV taping in Columbus.

Colt was like a kid with a new Lionel electric train on Christmas morning when he jumped into the cockpit. It was at that point he became the babyface and his only enemies were his own senses and the fates of the sky.

Buddy liked to live as dangerously in the air as he did in the ring. The pilots who would meet him at the Waycross airport knew it, too. My long-time friend, MATWATCHER Max Lide, once told me about an incident one Monday night.

"It was only a week and a half before his accident," Max remembers. "A storm was brewing after the matches and a pretty strong crosswind was kicking up. Buddy was determined to take off and I just flat told him, 'Now, Buddy, you may know everything there is to know about wrestling but I've logged a lot more hours in a plane than you have and you ain't got a bit of business taking off in that thing tonight.' Just like always, Buddy didn't pay me a bit of attention."

Only nine days after that adventure, Buddy Colt took off from Tampa, headed for the Miami matches with Mike McCord---later to gain fame as Austin Idol, Gary Hart and the infamous former Wonder Boy and current King of Wrestling, Bobby Shane. For one, it was to be his last flight.

The plane rocked in a current as it was over the Gulf of Mexico, an engine died and the crash would make news in several states. Colt, who had just regained the North American heavyweight championship from Bob Armstrong, and McCord suffered crushed feet and concussions. Hart miraculously only suffered some contusions and a broken arm. Shane, who was only coming into his prime at 28 as one of the unctuous heels in the U.S., perished. When the news reached Atlanta, promoter Paul Jones, who gave Shane one of his early starts, was almost speechless. Shane was like a son to him and the man who was the first to escape Butcher Vachon's dreaded hangman had just been married.

Shane and Colt had both been scheduled to appear at the Atlanta City Auditorium two nights later. I was driving on campus at the University of Georgia when WSB newscaster Gordon Van Moll delivered the news. I had to stop the car. No way Gordon could have said that. These people were the hearts and souls of my weekends. This wasn't supposed to happen.

Gary was able to revive his career. McCord, as Idol, went onto become a substantial star and Colt lived to become the sidekick of Gordon Solie at the Florida announcers' table. I just wonder what would have happened if Buddy had paid attention to Max.

TAPES: John Lanigan is offering a large selection for sale. Write for a list to John at Box 583, McKeesport PA 15134.

PICTURES: Steve Bryant, one of our top ringside photoqs, has changed addresses to 708 Wanda Lane, Tullahoma TN 37388. Write him for his photo list.

RATINGS RAP: SYNDICATION

| (Week Ending April 23) | Rating | Stations | Pct. U.S. |
|------------------------|--------|----------|-----------|
| WWF | 9.0 | 246 | 97% |
| NWA | 5.4 | 145 | 90% |

(ANALYSIS: Both promotions dropped from last week, partly from lower spring viewing levels. This would have been the second week of the new NWA format, so one has to ask if the job recapturing departed viewers isn't going to be much tougher.)

RATINGS RAP: CABLE

| (Week Ending May 8) | Rtg | Shr | Homes |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----------|
| WWF ALL-AMERICAN (USA 5/7) | 2.9 | 8.4 | 1.35 mil. |
| WWF PRIME TIME (USA 5/8) | 2.9 | 4.3 | 1.34 mil. |
| NWA MAIN EVENT (TBS 5/7) | 2.4 | 5.1 | 1.16 mil. |
| NWA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP (TBS 5/6) | 1.6 | 2.9 | 775,000 |
| NWA MAIN EVENT A.M. (TBS 5/6) | 1.0 | 8.3 | 485,000 |

(ANALYSIS: ALL-AMERICAN held onto its strong 8-plus share but PRIME TIME dipped a half share-point opposite strong network sweeps programming. NWA MAIN EVENT posted its best numbers in four weeks but WCW, saddled with a 10:15 start after the BRAVES, tied its lowest ever mark. A bright spot: the A.M. NME pulled its biggest rating and share yet. Why? Who knows at 7:05 in the morning?)

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